

The Fair Store
126-144 South State Street; half-block
bounded by South State, West Adams,
South Dearborn Streets, and alley
Chicago
Cook County
Illinois

HABS No. ILL-1060

HABS
ILL,
16-CHIG,
62-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Washington Planning and Service Center
1730 North Lynn Street
Arlington, Virginia

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

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Location: 126-144 South State Street; half-block bounded by South State, West Adams, South Dearborn Streets, and alley; Chicago, Cook County, Illinois.

Present Owner: Montgomery Ward Company.

Present Use: Currently being remodeled on interior and exterior; retail department store.

Statement of Significance: The Fair was designed by the firm of Jenney and Mundie in 1890. At the time of its completion, the building was one of the largest steel-framed structures in Chicago, as well as one of the largest commissions carried out by the firm.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners:

Legal description of property: Lots 5, 6, 7, 8 of block 141 of School Section Addition to Chicago of Section 16 - 39 - 14.

The following is based on the complete chain of title contained in book 468B, pp. 95-97, 99-101, in the Cook County Recorder's Office:

The property was originally owned by Mahlon D. Ogden as of the first entry, dated November 17, 1876 (Document 1111172). The book then records a number of leases that were obtained by E.J. Lehman, the founder of The Fair, from various owners of portions of the half-block area. The largest and most important of these transactions occurred on November 12, 1890, when The Fair leased lots 5-8 (the site of the present building) from Margarette E. Stearns (Document 1370528). The lease was renewed several times and the property remained in the hands of The Fair until it was purchased by Montgomery Ward on November 2, 1963 (Document 18963651-3).

2. Date of erection: 1890 - 1896.

3. Architect: The firm of William LeBaron Jenney and W.B. Mundie

Biographical sketch: Jenney was born in 1832. He came to Chicago in 1868, and was a professor of architecture at the University of Michigan from 1876 to 1880. He died on June 15, 1907. Below is a list of the architectural firms with which Jenney was associated:

Jenney, Schermerhorn, & Bogart
Jenney & Stanford D. Loring
Jenney (worked alone until 1886)
Jenney & Otis (to 1888)
Jenney & Mundie (to April 1, 1905 when E.C. Jensen was admitted on Jenney's retirement, creating the firm of Mundie, Jensen, & McClurg).

[Note: The above information was taken from a much more complete biography of Jenney by his partner W.B. Mundie, William LeBaron Jenney (Chicago: Library of the Chicago Historical Society, June 9, 1914), 11 pp. See Bibliography for additional sources of biographical information/.

4. Builder, suppliers, etc.: Built by the George A. Fuller Company.
5. Original plans, construction, etc.: "...built in 1892 as a nine-story and one-basement building to which two stories were added later;...spread foundations of concrete, beams and rails were set 9" high in anticipation of that amount of settlement and were replaced in 1923 and 1924 by hardpan caissons, except under the north wall, where caissons of rock were used. At the same time two sub-basements were added;...wind bracing consisted of diagonal rods and lattice girders between the steel columns;...a feature unique at that time in high buildings was the use of an enclosed steel chimney, on account of the lack of space for the foundation for a heavy masonry chimney." [Frank Randall, History of the Development of Building Construction in Chicago (Urbana: The University of Illinois Press, 1949), p. 127/. Dimensions: "front on Dearborn 200'; depth about 180'; height 9 stories and basement...12 passenger elevators; ...100 departments;...2500 employees;...annual sales are \$8,000,000 at retail...Established in 1875 by E.J. Lehman;...new building was erected in 1891, and all of the extensive operations on this ground went forward without stopping or decreasing the regular operations of the firm." [Ibid., p. 165/.

Frontage of 1080'; covers a block 190' by 350'; height

180', 667,500 (over 15½ acres); daylight penetrates every section of the house; 24 elevators in service; 10 floors of merchandise; 4,000-5,000 employees; 125 wagons, 400 horses, and drivers for delivery; average daily transactions over 5,000; over 4 million packages delivered in 12 months. Our Presidents, 1789-1904 (Chicago: 1904). See "A Journey through the Fair" in same for a description of the various departments in the building/.

For a more complete discussion of the structural system in the Fair, see Carl W. Condit, The Chicago School of Architecture (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1964), pp. 90-91.

B. Historical Events and Person Connected with the Structure:

The Fair was founded in a 16' wooden shack on State Street, north of Adams by E.J. Lehman in 1875. Lehman was born on January 27, 1849, in Tetrow, Mecklenburg-Schwerin, Germany.

He came to America in 1858 and his parents established a home in Chicago. Here he attended school and received religious instruction in the German Lutheran church. He died in Chicago on January 4, 1900.

Lehman chose to call this store "The Fair" for two reasons: he wished to imply to those reading the sign that fair dealing would be given all customers and also that the store was like a fair because it offered many and different things for sale at a cheap price. Soon Lehman found it necessary to expand his store, absorbing one adjoining building after another and adding new departments to his enterprise. The Fair took over Stern's "Dollar Store" (Marcus Stern's "Economy Block"), James P. Dalton's House Furnishing Store, the Alexander Brothers restaurant business, "The Famous", and "The Bankrupt Store". By 1886, when it became a corporation, The Fair consisted of a number of connected buildings, occupying the site of the present building.

Lehman recognized the need for a new large building and begun a quiet campaign for the securing of long-term leases on the property. By the summer of 1890 he was able to begin wrecking the old buildings. The new building was constructed in sections:

"Instead of stopping business, the work of construction was so handled as to prove a valuable advertisement. To build a skyscraper about a great store without stopping business for an hour was then a greater novelty than it is now...

The great building was constructed in sections - - practically in quarters - - and on the completion of each unit the goods and counters were shifted between the usual closing hour of a Saturday night and the following Monday morning. The Dearborn Street half was finished in 1891, and the entire structure completed in 1896."

When it was finally completed, the Fair was the largest department store in the world; its total cost was \$2,000,000.

Lehman and his Fair Store is often considered the founder of the modern department store. His philosophy was summarized by the motto "Everything for everybody, under one roof, at a lower price." Thus, Lehman conceived of the Fair as having a number of specialized departments, goods were priced at a "broken nickel price" (an unusual practice for the time), and everything was centered in a single large building. Volume, centralized shopping, as well as large scale newspaper advertising brought success to Lehman's firm. The Fair sponsored the world's first double-page advertisement, on November 20, 1892, in the Chicago Inter-Ocean. /The above information was taken from Forrest Crissey, Since Forty Years Ago (Chicago: Privately printed, 1915), and miscellaneous pamphlets in the Library of the Chicago Historical Society/.

C. Bibliography:

Chicago, Ill., Fair Store, Jenney and Mundie, architects, 1892 and alterations 1897, 1900-03, 1905 (Two additional floors). Microfilm roll 9, frames 177-249, located in the Burnham Library in the Art Institute of Chicago.

Condit, Carl W. The Chicago School of Architecture. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1964. pp. 84, 90-91, 104, Figs. 49-51.

Crissey, Forrest. Since Forty Years Ago. Chicago: Privately printed and presented by the Fair in commemoration of its 40th anniversary, 1915.

An account of the original growth of Chicago and its first department store; the story of centralized shopping under one roof: its unique location and events connected with its history. Library of the Chicago Historical Society. Contains drawings of the exterior and interior c. 1915.

Industrial Chicago Vol. 2. Chicago: Goodspeed Publishing Co., 1891-1896. p. 186. Picture.

See Vol. 1, p. 69 for biographical sketch of Jenney.

Jensen, Elmer C. "Origin of the Skyscraper," Union League Men and Events, v. XXVII, no. 9-10. (Chicago: Library of the Chicago Historical Society, 1950). pp. 21-23, 15-17, illus.

Jensen was senior partner of the firm of Mundie, Jensen & McClurg.

Jones, John H. (ed.) A Half Century of Chicago Building. Chicago: 1910.

Six views of the store from 1875 to 1909.

Kirkland, Joseph and Caroline. The Story of Chicago. Chicago: Dibble Publishing Company, 1894. p. 282. Biographical sketch of Jenney.

Miscellaneous pamphlets filed under "The Fair, firm Chicago," in the Chicago Historical Society Library. (Several catalogues with floor plans of various floors and departments; also old views.)

Mundie, W.B. William LeBaron Jenney. Chicago: Library of the Chicago Historical Society, June 9, 1914. 11 pp.

A sketch of the life of William LeBaron Jenney given by Mr. W.B. Mundie upon the occasion of the presentation by Mr. Mundie of a portrait of Mr. Jenney, painted by Walter Ufer, to the Illinois Chapter, A.I.A., for its Gallery of Architects, at its annual meeting held at the Art Institute, Chicago, Illinois, June 9, 1914.

Our Presidents, 1789-1904. Chicago: Library of the Chicago Historical Society, 1904.

Description of the Fair, firm, Chicago.

Prominent Buildings Erected by George A. Fuller Co. (189-:12-13; also in 1904:140-141; 1910:79).

Photographs and plan.

Randall, Frank A. History of the Development of Building Construction in Chicago. Urbana: The University of Illinois Press, 1949. pp. 5, 93, 127, 165. Bibliography p. 127.

Scrapbook compiled by William LeBaron Jenney covering the period from about 1865 to 1901. Largely clippings from newspapers of articles written by Jenney. Library of the Chicago Historical Society.

The Biographical Dictionary and Portrait Gallery of Representative Men of Chicago, Minnesota Cities and World's Columbian Exposition. 3 Vol. Chicago: American

Biographical Publishing Company, 1892. Vol. 1, pp. 92-94.

Biographical sketch of Jenney.

"The Chicago Construction, or Tall Buildings on a Compressible Soil; paper read before the 25th Annual Convention of the American Institute of Architects at Boston, Mass., October 29, 1891, by William LeBaron Jenney." "Design for the completion of the Fair building, Chicago; W.L.B. Jenney and W.B. Mundie architects." Inland Architect 18-19:41 (November 1891-February 1892), pl. fol. p. 56, pl. fol. p. 16.

Prepared by Larry J. Homolka,
Historian
National Park Service
August 1964
J. William Rudd,
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PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: An example of skeleton steel-framing by William LeBaron Jenney. Jenney was the first architect in Chicago to use this type of framing.
2. Condition of fabric: Fair, the building is structurally sound, but painted surfaces have been badly neglected. At the time of this survey, extensive remodeling of both interior and exterior is being done by architects Perkins and Will for the new owners, Montgomery Ward & Company. This remodeling will completely change the appearance of the building.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Number of stories: Eleven.
2. Number of bays: Eight on the east and west sides, fifteen on the south side.
3. Overall dimensions: 350' - 0" x 180' - 0".
4. Layout and shape: Rectangular.
5. Foundations: In 1924, caissons replaced original concrete spread footings and carried to hardpan except

under the north wall where caissons go to rock.

6. Wall construction: Brick and terra cotta over steel frame. First floor is painted green, second floor is painted a deep brown, and remaining nine floors are painted grey.
7. Structural system: Skeleton steel framing with wind-bracing, which consists of diagonal rods and lattice girders between the steel columns.
8. Chimneys: A unique innovation at the time was the use of an enclosed steel chimney; lack of space for a foundation made a conventional masonry chimney impossible.
9. Openings:
 - a. Doors and doorways: East and west sides each have two main entrances. South side has one original entrance and a second later one near the south west corner; a secondary entrance has also been added on the west side. The original west entrances and the original south entrance have original doors and hardware.
 - b. Windows: First floor - open show windows. Second floor - "Chicago windows" with large fixed pane picture window flanked by two one-over-one-light double-hung ventilating units. Third through eleventh floors have three one-over-one-light, double-hung sash per bay, except corner bays which have two slightly wider one-over-one-light, double hung sash. Rear or north wall has industrial double-hung units throughout.
10. Roof:
 - a. Shape, covering: Flat - built-up.
 - b. Cornice, eaves: Cornice has been removed, belt courses occur at sill level of floors two, three, six and seven. Belt courses at floors six and seven strongly accented.
 - c. Dormers, cupolas, towers: Pent-house on roof for mechanical.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor Plans:

- a. Basements: Two sub-basements were added in 1924 when the caissons were put in. These are below the normal basement level. The regular basement is used for trade.
- b. First Floor: The first floor is used for trade; the partial balcony on the north-east is a small restaurant.
- c. Upper Floors: Most upper floors are used for open display; the ninth floor is rented as office space.

2. Stairways: There are two stairways in the building. One is on the north side of the building, and one on the south side of the building. A very shallow tread and riser ratio ($6\frac{1}{2}$ "-12") is used. The handrail is wooden with a repetitive wrought-iron floral design between pickets spaced 12" on center. This design is on an 8" x 8" square panel at the landings and on an 8" x 8" rhombus on the stair runs. The treads are terrazzo from floors one to two, and are wooden on floors above. Elevators are located near the south-east and south-west areas of the building, and on the south wall.

3. Flooring: The first floor is marble; the floors above are wooden on a concrete base. There is some carpeting.

4. Wall and ceiling finish: Painted plaster.

5. Doorways and doors: Mostly new.

6. Lighting: Electrical.

7. Heating: Central.

D. Site and Surroundings:

Orientation: The building covers the south half of the block bounded by Dearborn, Adams, State and Monroe Streets, in the heart of the loop area of down-town Chicago.

Prepared by J. William Rudd,
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National Park Service
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